

CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

HISTORIC DESIGNATION EVALUATION

STAFF ANALYSIS

December 4, 2000

MEETING NO.: 11-00

SUBJECT: 9110 Darnestown Road

MEETING DATE: 11/21/00, continued to 12/19/00

APPLICANT & CONTRACT PURCHASER: Somerford Corp.

REPRESENTED BY: Wilkes Artis, Chartered, Attorneys at Law
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Tim Dugan, Attorney
Dennis Hughes, Architectural Historian and Attorney
Erica Leatham, Associate

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff concurs with the consultant's findings that the site at 9110 Darnestown Road does not meet the criteria for designation as a Rockville Historic District in accordance with the adopted criteria, attachment A.

BACKGROUND

9110 Darnestown Road is currently located in an unincorporated portion of Montgomery County. As part of Somerford Corporation's development proposal, however, annexation of the property into the City of Rockville and demolition of the structures on the site are being pursued. Annexation of the property was recommended for approval by the Rockville Planning Commission on November 29, 2000. The house was built in 1928 and the Historic District Commission (HDC) reviews all sites in the city or proposed for annexation into the city that are 50 years of age or older to determine architectural, cultural or historical significance to the City of Rockville. If the HDC finds that the property meets the criteria for historic designation, it will submit that recommendation to the Mayor and Council.

The property at 9110 Darnestown Road was initially identified by the HDC as possibly requiring further investigation at their meeting on March 16, 1999 while conducting a preliminary

evaluation of an adjacent property at 9150 Darnestown Road. It was determined at that meeting that 9150 Darnestown Road did not meet the criteria for historic designation.



Front (North) View

9110 Darnestown Road

Side (West) View

EVALUATION PROCESS

Notices of the HDC evaluation were sent via first class mail to 280 owners of record located within ¼ mile of the property as well as to the Glenora Hills Citizen's Association, the Griffith Oaks Homeowners Association, the Rockshire Association, Peerless Rockville, and the Montgomery County Historical Society. The agenda for this meeting was also posted on the city's web page with the Wilkes Artis report, and a sign was posted at the site.

No citizens or organizations provided any public comment or testimony at this hearing.

The record closed on December 1, 2000 at the close of business. Prior to the record closing, Dennis Hughes of Wilkes Artis submitted a letter which indicated that he had completed further research at the Montgomery County Historical Society, the Montgomery County Register of Wills office and the Montgomery County Land Records office, and he had been in contact with Maizie Cummings of Peerless Rockville. Mr. Hughes' conclusions subsequent to this additional investigation remained consistent with his original report.

Notice of the continuation of the Evaluation of 9110 Darnestown Road for Historic Designation was sent on December 7, 2000 by U.S. first class mail to 280 owners of record within ¼ mile of the subject and to the Glenora Hills Citizen's Association, the Griffith Oaks Homeowners Association, the Rockshire Association, Peerless Rockville and the Montgomery County Historical Society. The agenda for this meeting was posted on the city's web page and a sign was posted at the site.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Dugan and Mr. Hughes concluded in their presentation at the November 21, 2000 HDC public hearing that the house at 9110 Darnestown Road does not warrant historic designation, does not possess historical, cultural, architectural, or design significance, and therefore does not meet any of the city's Historic District Designation Criteria. Staff concurs with the findings presented by the consultant for the applicant.

Summary of Findings of Wilkes Artis

Historic and Cultural Significance

Criteria:

- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **City**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **County**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **State**
- Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the **Nation**
- Is the site of a significant historic event
- Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society
- Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities

The house at 9110 Darnestown Road has been located within Montgomery County for more than 70 years and was not recommended for inclusion in the county's Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County. It is not listed as an historic resource in the county. It does not contribute value to the development history, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, or Nation. It is not located within the City of Rockville and therefore is not part of the city's history. It is not identified or associated with any significant historical event and it is not identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society. The house abuts several modern subdivisions and the Thomas Farm mixed use development which have removed its former context as a rural property. The house is a modest example of a type of housing that is common to Rockville, Montgomery County, and surrounding areas. Dennis Hughes identified approximately 20 properties in Rockville that are similar bungalow styles.

Architectural and Design Significance

Criteria:

- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction
- Represents the work of a master
- Possesses high artistic values
- Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, or
- Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

The house is a common example of a vernacular bungalow-style house which was popular from the beginning of the 20th century through the 1930s. Although its original form remains largely recognizable, its setting has been altered and the house itself does not possess design significance. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Numerous more authentic examples of this type of vernacular residential construction can be found in Rockville and in the county. The house's original ground level siding has been replaced with synthetic siding. Mr. Hughes examined the siding and did not find any evidence of the original siding beneath. There have been two single-level additions to the south and west sides of the house. There is a mix of original and replacement windows.

The house does not represent the work of a master. It is a vernacular example of construction and was likely assembled from a mail order kit or built by a local builder.

The house does not possess high artistic value. It is a modest and common variety of bungalow and does not possess the most significant characteristics of the higher style bungalow or Craftsman houses, such as decorative eaves, exposed rafters or other exterior embellishment.

The house does not represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

It does not represent an established or visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape. The area in which the property is located has changed significantly over the past 40 years due to road widening, subdivision development, and redevelopment of the Thomas Farm across Darnestown Road. The 9110 Darnestown Road lot does not exhibit exceptional qualities.

Staff Findings

At the evaluation hearing, the HDC was interested in learning more about the ownership of the house at 9110 Darnestown Road to determine if any past/present owners were significant to Rockville or Montgomery County history or influenced society. Staff conducted research on the following owners of record:

<u>Owner(s)</u>	<u>Record Date</u>
James W. and Maggie V. McFarland	
George M. and Ellen C. Frey	10/14/01
William Elwood and Anne Rebecca Wilt	09/23/19
Robert L. Tolson*	04/01/25
Stephen C. Cromwell	08/21/35
Harry Reginald and Alice May Seguin	09/26/36
Walter W. and Margaret A. Belson	08/30/48
Harold M. and Ruby T. Pease	10/05/53
Thomas C. and Mildred C. Keys	04/19/62
Sue K. Margelos and Rebecca E. Boyd	07/07/97

<p>* Robert L. Tolson defaulted on the deed and Albert M. Bouic became the assignee before the property was transferred to Stephen C. Cromwell.</p>

The McFarland family owned Windy Knoll Farm (Thomas Farm) and another farm across the road. The family spent summer months at the farmhouse but also owned a house in Rockville. The house at 9110 Darnestown Road was not built during the McFarland period of ownership.

The 9110 Darnestown Road house was built in 1928 during the property ownership of Robert Tolson. Tolson later defaulted on the property. Albert M. Bouic was the trustee following the default and the property was transferred to Stephen Cromwell in 1935.

The only significant information found while researching owner names was on Albert M. Bouic and Stephen C. Cromwell. The Bouic family is one of the best known and oldest families in Montgomery County. Albert M. Bouic served as State's Attorney in Montgomery County during World War I. He was a vice president and attorney for the Farmer's Bank and Trust Company and a director of the board of the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Montgomery County. He was also a charter member of the Rotary Club of Rockville. Albert M. Bouic practiced law in a small building at 208 West Montgomery Avenue, which had formerly been used by his father, William Veirs Bouic.

Bouic never lived at 9110 Darnestown Road. He lived at a house at Montgomery Avenue and Park Street that his family had owned since 1850 until he sold it in the mid-1950s. He then resided at 117 South Van Buren Street until he died in 1969.

Albert M. Bouic was the assignee in the default on 9110 Darnestown Road by Robert L. Tolson. Bouic never actually took title of the property, he only handled the foreclosure. Therefore, although Albert M. Bouic was significant to the City of Rockville and to Montgomery County, he is not significantly identified with the property at 9110 Darnestown Road.

The Cromwell family has been a fixture of Montgomery County society for decades. Stephen C. Cromwell, owner of 9110 Darnestown Road for approximately one year (1935-36), was executive director of the Maryland Department of Employment Security from 1961 to 1967. He was a recognized authority on unemployment compensation laws and he drafted the original Maryland unemployment statute which served as a model for similar laws in all other states. He acted as a consultant to Congress and to the White House and spoke on the subject internationally. Cromwell also worked for the Maryland Emergency Relief Administration and the Civil Works Administration and was a district director of the Works Progress Administration. Cromwell was chairman of the Montgomery County Selective Service Board for 20 years and he received a citation from President Eisenhower in 1960 for the nation's longest continuous service in this role. He was chairman of the advisory board of the Maryland National Bank and served on the board of directors of the Montgomery County YMCA. He was raised in Rockville and was the son of the city editor of The Washington Star. At the time of Stephen Cromwell's death, his son, James J. Cromwell was a prominent Montgomery County lawyer and an Assistant State's Attorney. He was a partner in the Miles and Stockbridge law firm in Rockville. Cromwell's other son, Stephen C. Cromwell, Jr. was a doctor in Rockville. Mr. Cromwell's

grandchildren (James J. Cromwell's children) lived in houses on "Hectic Hill Lane", a street that Stephen C. Cromwell named himself.

Although the Cromwell family, including Stephen C. Cromwell, has a long and distinctive history in Rockville and Montgomery County, it is not likely that Stephen C. Cromwell actually lived at 9110 Darnestown Road because he purchased the property at a foreclosure and only held it for one year. He more likely bought it as an investment and quickly re-sold it. Therefore, the Cromwell family does not contribute significance to the site.

No information was found on the Frey, Wilt, Seguin, Belson or Keys families. Thomas and Mildred C. Keys are not related to Francis Scott Key or connected to the name "Key West Avenue".

It is the conclusion of staff that the property at 9110 Darnestown Road is not identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society, nor is it the site of a significant historic event. More importantly, the site was and is outside the corporate limits of the City of Rockville, although an application for annexation is in process. Other family, event, architectural, or cultural significance of great impact to the City would override the site's location, but are not present in the history. Although the structure is a recognizable example of a typical 1920 to 1930 Craftsman style bungalow, it is not unique to the City and not sufficient to render the site significant to the City. In addition, a single site historic district requires that several of the designation criteria be met, unlike a multiple site district which can include some examples of less significance. The property at 9110 Darnestown Road does not meet the criteria necessary for designation, especially as a single site. Staff therefore concurs with the findings of the consultant for the applicant. Staff does not advise that the house at 9110 be recommended for historic designation based on applicable cited criteria and findings.

Bibliography:

Montgomery County Historical Society, biography files and obituary files.
Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.

Western Gateway to the National Capital (Rockville, Maryland), by Noma Thompson, July 1950.